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## FSS Helps Family in Tough Times

With three children and a fourth on the way, Connie Nelson and her family found themselves economically struggling. Though her husband worked, they couldn't afford for her to work and could only afford a less-than stellar two-bedroom apartment. They found help with LHA in 1998.

"They helped us be able to provide something better for our family," Nelson said. When her youngest turned 4, Nelson decided to go to school to become a nurse. She then entered LHA's Family Self Sufficiency Program for additional support and financial assistance. Her goals were to finish school and get full time work. Once enrolled in the nursing program, life continued to throw the family curveballs.

"I had more than enough reasons to quit school, especially when my mother, who lived in California got sick," she said. Nelson considered quitting, but stuck to her plan and tried to balance whatever life brought her. She lessened her schedule only taking one course to be able to help her parents. Each school break she would visit her parents to assist them with their business. They eventually had to close the business and move back to Nebraska. Sadly, her mothers illness continued and she died in 2003.

During this time, Nelson also began taking care of her physically disabled brother. The seven in her household were sharing a split-level house, without wheel chair access. Her brothers medical needs forced her to make the tough decision to find outside help. He was able to receive assistance and moved into his own apartment. The family was finally back on track when her husband became very ill with jaundice and a non-functioning liver. He was hospitalized and eventually recovered. "It's been hard, but people can live through that," she said. "When you have so little to live on for the month it is difficult. There were times we had to make a decision to buy gas or food."

Nelson graduated in May and gained full-time employment at Madonna Rehabilitation. She still hasn't gotten used to having money in the bank. "The kids put up with a lot and I wanted to make it worth it to them," she said. "The struggle has been worth it. This was the first Thanksgiving I didn't have to worry about affording to feed my family."

Nelson credits her family with helping her to achieve her goals. For her graduation, the family had matching T-shirts stating, "Team Nelson: we survived nursing school". "I feel fortunate to have a second chance and go down another path," she said. "Even when it seems to tough to keeping going, you have to keep your goals in front of you and make your way through everything else."



Connie Nelson reached her goals thanks to the support of her family. From left: Rachelle, Lonnie, Rebecca, Jaron, Connie and Jael Nelson.